

Hanna Tuulikki

rīvus

23rd biennale of sydney



Image: Hanna Tuulikki, *Seals'kin: Lament* (video still), 2022

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Seals'kin:lament

- Listen here



Image: Four Minutes To Midnight, 2022

Hanna Tuulikki's vocal improvisation based on traditional seal-calling songs was recorded on location in coastal Aberdeenshire in Scotland. As you listen, turn your attention to the water in front of you, and allow yourself to be transported to the mouth of the river Ythan, where the freshwater meets the North Sea and, where hundreds of grey and common seals haul out on the estuary banks, the sound of their plaintive calls carried on the wind.

In Scottish folklore, mythical seal people known as selkies were said to shed their skins, and step from water as humans until mysteriously disappearing back to sea. Thought by some to be the souls of the departed, perhaps these selkie tales of loss and longing helped to alleviate feelings of sorrow from a sudden death in the community, or from relatives lost at sea.

A number of musical traditions appear to blur the line between human and seal, including melodies which imitate their mournful sounds, and haunting seal-calling songs sung to attract seals to the shore. These practices of singing to, or with seals, may have maintained a felt connection with the dead through the fostering of kinship, but as folkloric coping mechanisms for grief, how might these songs as practices of making kin help us to come to terms with the collective and personal tragedies of the present pandemic? And furthermore, how might they help us to navigate the sorrow of ecological or climate grief?



Image: Hanna Tuulikki, *Seals'kin: lament* (video still), 2022



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